

‘Conscience is *God*’: *Macbeth* and Coleridge’s Translation of the *Wallenstein* Plays of Friedrich Schiller

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IN ONE OF HER EXEMPLARY STUDIES of Coleridge’s translations of the *Wallenstein* plays, Joyce Crick points out that this work gave Coleridge ‘the opportunity of a large-scale exercise in the Shakespearean mode’.¹ Crick’s expression is precise. The translations of Friedrich Schiller that Coleridge undertook in 1800 did provide an *opportunity*, as Coleridge himself belatedly acknowledged when he declared twenty years later that the work was his ‘happiest attempt, during the prime manhood of my intellect’ (qtd. CPW 3:1 173); this was a significant change in attitude from his expression of ‘Disgust’ when pressed by the publisher’s deadline at the time (CL I 643, qtd. CPW 3:1 171). The translations are *large-scale*, not only in the literal sense that they occupy more space than any other piece in Coleridge’s *Poetical Works*,² but also because they explore the philosophical and religious themes that became central to Coleridge’s mature thought. And most importantly, Coleridge’s *Wallenstein* translations are in the *Shakespearean mode*. Schiller filled his work with allusions to Shakespeare both in character and language, and Coleridge, as Crick explains, ‘was quick to hear the echoes and return them with advantages.’³ She sums up: ‘Put simply, his *Wallenstein* is a lot more Shakespearean than Schiller’s.’⁴ I wish to develop Crick’s recognition of the Shakespearean mode of Coleridge the translator, in order to suggest that the translations of *The Piccolomini* and *The Death of Wallenstein* played a greater part than is generally admitted in Coleridge’s development as a poet and as a thinker. I do so by considering the pervasive presence of the most important of all the literary influences on both the original *Wallenstein* and Coleridge’s creative translations: *Macbeth*. I argue that translating Schiller enabled Coleridge to develop his thinking about the large, *Macbeth*-related themes of fate, duty and the conscience.⁵ The original verse drama that Coleridge had previously composed (largely in 1797), *Osorio*, whilst already influenced by Schiller,⁶ conspicuously lacks an element that is central to *Wallenstein*: *Osorio*

¹ Joyce Crick, ‘Appendix: Coleridge as Translator of Schiller’s *Wallenstein* Plays’, CPW 3:1, 941. I am grateful for the comments of the participants in the Friends of Coleridge weekend on the topic of ‘Coleridge the Shakespearean’ at Halsway, 24–26 October 2014, who heard a previous version of this paper. Graham Davidson’s advice has been especially useful.

² In my old copy of *The Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* printed by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (n.d.), unlike in any modern selection, the *Wallenstein* plays conclude the book and occupy over one-third of the whole.

³ Joyce Crick, ‘Something on William Shakespeare Occasioned by *Wallenstein*’, *Coleridge Bulletin*, n.s. 29 (2007), 31–41 (38).

⁴ Ibid., 40. Cf. Joyce Crick, ‘Some Editorial and Stylistic Observations on Coleridge’s Translation of Schiller’s *Wallenstein*’, *Publications of the English Goethe Society* 56 (1984), 58–67. Crick has also demonstrated Coleridge’s linguistic competence (CPW 3:1, 937).

⁵ Crick again gets to the heart of the matter: ‘*Macbeth* has left its mark [...] on Schiller’s work] in the underlying interplay of character and destiny, and in a plot which turns on ambiguous and fateful prophecy.’ ‘Something on William Shakespeare’, 39.

⁶ See Donald G. Priestman, ‘Godwin, Schiller and the Polemics of Coleridge’s *Osorio*’, *Bulletin of Research in the Humanities*, 82 (1979), 236–48. Cf. Chris Murray, *Tragic Coleridge* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 18.

has no symbol for the workings of fate, no equivalent of the witches in *Macbeth*. As translator of *Wallenstein*, however, Coleridge is presented with such a symbol, in the form of astrological signs and predictions. This is the most significant of the ways in which the *Wallenstein* project was a timely and fruitful one for Coleridge in 1800.

Coleridge's focus on the competing claims of destiny and free will in his translations will emerge through close analysis of key speeches of three of the characters in the plays. In that light, I will then consider Coleridge's references to *Wallenstein* in his subsequent Shakespeare-criticism. All this will help to explain how Coleridge came to note the memorable phrase 'Conscience is God' in the margin of a copy of his own translation. First, however, we must retrace some aspects of Coleridge's fascinated responses to Schiller and his work.

Coleridge and the 'Bard tremendous in sublimity': a Shakespearean affinity

The first work of Schiller that Coleridge read, *The Robbers*, was a product of the German dramatist's *Sturm und Drang* ('storm and stress') phase. Coleridge responded in kind, writing excitedly to Robert Southey:

'Tis past one o'clock in the morning—I sate down at twelve o'clock to read the 'Robbers' of Schiller—I had read chill and trembling until I came to the part where Moor fires a pistol over the Robbers who are asleep—I could read no more—My God! Southey! Who is this Schiller? This Convulser of the Heart? Did he write his Tragedy amid the yelling of Fiends? —I should not like to [be] able to describe such Characters—I tremble like an Aspen Leaf—Upon my Soul, I write to you because I am frightened—I had better go to Bed. Why have we ever called Milton sublime? (CL I 122)

Since Coleridge as yet had no German in 1794, he read *The Robbers* in the English translation.⁷ This experience may subsequently have contributed to his willingness to make other works of Schiller available to Anglophone readers; in 1796, he talked of translating Schiller's complete works (CL I 209 to Thomas Poole, 5 May 1796). First, though, he continued his early celebration of Schiller with an excited sonnet, 'To the Author of *The Robbers*' (November 1794), in which he addresses the German writer as a 'Bard tremendous in sublimity!' The poet expresses the hope that he may find an echo of Schiller's sublimity within himself:

Could I behold thee in thy loftier mood,
Wand'ring at eve with finely frenzied eye
Beneath some vast old tempest-swinging wood!

⁷ By Alexander Tytler, published in 1792; as Mays notes, this text differs from the German and English versions known today (CPW 1:1, 151). See further Crick, 'Something on William Shakespeare', 32.

Awhile with mute awe gazing I would brood:
Then weep aloud in a wild extacy!⁸

These final lines of the sonnet ('Could I...I would') anticipate the movement of the final stanza of 'Kubla Khan' ('Could I revive within me/ Her symphony and song,/ To such a deep delight t'would win me...', lines 42-44). Also, the 'finely-frenzied eye' that Coleridge imagines the dramatist Schiller as possessing alludes to the *locus classicus* for eighteenth-century readers of Shakespeare, Duke Theseus's speech on the imagination in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Act V Scene I): 'The poet's eye in a fine frenzy rolling...'. As if to underline this point, Coleridge explicitly affirms the link between Schiller and Shakespeare – in the former's favour – in a curious footnote to his own sonnet: 'Schiller introduces no supernatural beings; yet his human beings agitate and astonish more than all the *goblin* rout – even of Shakespeare'.⁹ Again, the surface reference is to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, but what stands out is Coleridge's acceptance of the notion that Schiller was a 'German Shakespeare' (to borrow an epithet then current in Germany).¹⁰ Given Coleridge's hope of reintroducing Shakespearean drama to England, just as Schiller had reintroduced it – supposedly with advantages – in Germany, the inspired bard in Coleridge's sonnet is clearly an idealised self-portrait.

Schiller and Coleridge, then, shared a general propensity for Shakespeareanizing. And both poets reflected persistently on one Shakespearean tragedy in particular: *Macbeth*. Friedrich Schlegel, although in a sarcastic ditty lampooning Schiller's work, was quite right to note: 'Vom Macbeth hat der Wallenstein am meisten' [Wallenstein owes most to Macbeth].¹¹ Schiller frequently referred to *Macbeth* in his letters during the lengthy period of composing the *Wallenstein* plays in the 1790s, especially as he reflected on the relationship between free will and natural necessity. For instance, he wrote to Goethe: 'Actual fate is still contributing too little and the hero's own mistakes too much to his misfortune. To some extent I am comforted here by the example of Macbeth, where again fate is considerably less responsible than the man for the latter's downfall.'¹² And it was no doubt

⁸ CPW 1:1, 152, poem 86, lines 10-14. The sonnet is relatively immature, containing the double epithets ('finely frenzied', 'tempest-swinging') that Coleridge would later repudiate (BL I 6-7). Coleridge also noted a semantic infelicity: 'It is strange that in the Sonnet to Schiller I wish to die—die that nothing may stamp me mortal—this Bull never struck me till Charles Lloyd mentioned it—the Sense is evident enough—but the word is ridiculously ambiguous' (CL I 43).

⁹ CPW 1:1, 152, poem 86.

¹⁰ Qtd. Crick, CPW 3:1, 940. For Schiller's English reception, see Frederic Ewen, *The Prestige of Schiller in England, 1788-1859* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1932), and Robert Pick, *Schiller in England, 1787-1960: A Bibliography* (Leeds: English Goethe Society, 1961).

¹¹ Quoted in Schiller, *Wallenstein*, ed. Frithjof Stock (Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 2005), 945. Schlegel is probably talking about the characters rather than the plays, but the statement applies sufficiently to both. The latest critical edition of Schiller's work (*Wallenstein. Anmerkungen*, ed. Norbert Oellers (Weimar: Verlag Hermann Boehlaus Nachfolger, 2013), vol. 8 part 3 of *Schillers Werke. Nationalausgabe*), lists more allusions to Macbeth than to any other Shakespeare play (43).

¹² 'Das eigentliche Schicksal tut noch zu wenig, und der eigne Fehler des Helden noch zuviel zu seinem Unglück. Mich tröstet hier aber einigermaßen das Beispiel des Macbeth, wo das Schicksal ebenfalls weit weniger Schuld hat als der Mensch, daß er zu Grunde geht.' Schiller to Goethe, 28 Nov 1796, in *Briefwechsel zwischen Schiller und Goethe in den Jahren 1794 bis 1805*, ed. Manfred Beetz, 2 vols

the thematic convergence with his own work that spurred Schiller to translate *Macbeth* into German in 1800, soon after the completion of the *Wallenstein* trilogy.¹³

Coleridge's poetry, meanwhile, displays the pervasive influence of *Macbeth*. Fascinated by the three witches, Coleridge recast them as three allegorical characters in 'Fire, Famine and Slaughter: A War Eclogue' (1797). This poem's first words, 'Sisters! sisters!' evoke Shakespeare's 'weird sisters'.¹⁴ Its rattling dialogue is also informed by *Macbeth*, which Coleridge would later describe as 'the most rapid of all Shakespeare's plays'.¹⁵ Verbal echoes appear in other poems, too. Geraldine's words in the first part of *Christabel* ('Off, wandering mother! Peak and pine! / I have power to bid thee flee'¹⁶) contain a quotation ('peak and pine') from a speech by one of the witches of *Macbeth* that must have haunted Coleridge's imagination, for it also emerges in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1797-8):

About, about, in reel and rout
The Death-fires danc'd at night;
The water, like a witch's oils,
Burnt green and blue and white.¹⁷

Here the direct quotation is from the witches' song in *Macbeth*: 'The weird sisters hand in hand, / Posters of the sea and land, / Thus do go about, about' (Act I Scene 3, 30-32). But as John Livingstone Lowes first noted, the lines of the first witch describing how she will torment a mariner are of greater relevance to the action of the *Ancient Mariner*:

I'll drain him dry as hay.
Sleep shall neither night nor day
Hang upon his pent-house lid;
He shall live a man forbid.
Weary sevensnights nine times nine
Shall he dwindle, peak, and pine.
Though his bark cannot be lost,
Yet it shall be tempest-tost.¹⁸

Further, the presence of *Macbeth* in the *Ancient Mariner* runs deeper than the

(Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1990, 2005), I, 278.

¹³ See Dorothy Burdorf, *A Comparison Between Shakespeare and Schiller's Macbeth* (Master's thesis, Berkeley, California, 1908, online at <https://archive.org>).

¹⁴ CPW 1:1, 440, poem 167, line 1.

¹⁵ 'Notes on Macbeth', *Literary Remains of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. H.N. Coleridge (London: William Pickering, 1836), 235. Coleridge refers to rhythmic speed rather than to the fact that *Macbeth* is the shortest Shakespearean tragedy.

¹⁶ CPW 1:1, 489, poem 176, lines 205-6.

¹⁷ CPW 1:1, 382, poem 161, lines 127-30.

¹⁸ *Macbeth*, Act I Scene 3, 17-25. John Livingstone Lowes, *The Road to Xanadu: A Study in the Ways of the Imagination* (1927; London: Pan Books, 1978), 78.

levels of verbal echo and supernatural plot mechanism. It is in the *Ancient Mariner* that Coleridge first deeply explores the topic that was to remain central to his thought: moral guilt and the self-tormenting conscience. This theme is clearly informed, in part, by *Macbeth*. Yet the difference from *Macbeth* is important, too: for to the extent that the *Ancient Mariner* is a tale about retribution (and forgiveness) for a guilty deed, the poem is overdetermined. The Mariner's punishment in no way corresponds to his 'crime' of shooting an albatross, nor does the fatal deed follow clearly from a particular flaw in character or an overpowering inducement. The poem is therefore not a tragedy in anything like the Greek or Shakespearean senses. It represents, rather, a transitional moment in Coleridge's intellectual development. Coleridge still professed Unitarianism in 1797, which committed him 'strictly... [to] deny the existence of any Evil', on the Priestleyan grounds that God brings everything to a good end, and human beings have no free will (LPR 1795, 105). Yet the poet was already moving toward a different world-view in which the reality of evil, as revealed by every person's consciousness of personal guilt, was to be the central tenet.¹⁹ The 'Ancient Mariner' is a poem of exploration, and this is one of the ideas it explores; but it does so in an archaic and magical setting, with a superstitious protagonist 'safely' remote from Coleridge's own world.

The *Wallenstein* plays likewise give Coleridge a canvas at some distance from 1790s England.²⁰ Again Coleridge was operating with a superstitious principal protagonist, Wallenstein's belief (as we will see) being in astrology, by contrast to the Mariner's popular Catholicism. But the translation of *Wallenstein* nevertheless brought Coleridge's verse closer to his particular concerns in 1800. This is so partly in a political sense. First, Schiller's play is concerned with military conflict, a constant preoccupation of 1790s Europe. Its plot deals with mercenary warfare. Although the *Wallenstein* plays are set in the distant past, the phenomenon was one that had reappeared during the French Revolutionary Wars, as Coleridge had deplored in *Religious Musings* (published 1796): 'Each petty German Princeling, nurs'd in gore! / Soul-harden'd barterers of human blood!' (lines 193-4). Second, Coleridge would have been alert to the fact that Wallenstein's dream of a unified, peaceful Germany, echoes the longing for unification expressed by many German writers of his own generation.²¹ And third, as Julie Carlson has argued, the *Wallenstein* trilogy 'dramatizes the tragedy of Romantic proposals for change' in politics.²²

¹⁹ Coleridge distinguished his notion of original sin from the idea of hereditary guilt, and explained in *Aids to Reflection* (1825): 'A Sin is an Evil which has its ground or origin in the Agent, and not in the Compulsion of Circumstances' (AR 266).

²⁰ I am answering the question posed by Crick and Mays, 'Do FS's plays provide a neutral space where [Coleridge] felt able to experiment with the language of his changing views?' (CPW 3:1, 226) in the affirmative.

²¹ In this regard Theodor Ziolkowski, *The Hesitant Hero: Private Inhibition, Cultural Crisis* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2004), 117, cites Novalis, *Christendom or Europa* (1799).

²² Julie A. Carlson, 'Command Performances: Burke, Coleridge, and Schiller's Dramatic Reflections on the Revolution in France', *The Wordsworth Circle*, 23:2, 117-34 (124).

Important though the political interest is, however, it is precisely the post-revolutionary, introspective retreat from political activity into a concern with the grounds of moral choice that *Wallenstein* helps Coleridge to pursue. Even by the time Coleridge read *The Robbers*, Schiller had moved on from his *Sturm und Drang* phase into a more philosophical concern with developing Kantian thought, in prose and in a historical framework. Similarly, Coleridge had retreated from radical politics by the end of the 1790s and in the new decade made the study of Kant central to his new self-fashioning as a philosopher of genius.²³ The Kantian emphasis on duty imparts a particular resonance to Coleridge’s translations – as does the agony of conscience in *Macbeth*.

Coleridge’s changing responses to Schiller: overcoming “Disgust”

The probable reason that Crick’s hints regarding the parallel elective affinity of Coleridge and Schiller with *Macbeth* have not been taken up is that critics have accepted at face value the protests Coleridge issued while translating and afterwards.²⁴ On 1 November 1800 Coleridge blamed ‘that accursed Wallenstein’ for ‘the deep unutterable Disgust’ which prevented him from completing ‘Christabel’.²⁵ He described the work as motivated purely by financial need. The translations thus became assimilated to Coleridge’s personal myth of the decline of his poetic inspiration.²⁶ Yet it is quite natural, in a general sense, for translators to experience misgivings about the work in which they have immersed themselves but can never fully make their own. And although he revoked his admiration of Schiller’s personality (‘To be known to Schiller was a thought, that passed across my brain & vanished—I would not stir 20 yards out of my way to *know* him.’—), and retracted the complimentary aspect of his comparisons of Schiller with Shakspeare (‘Schiller disgusted with Kotzebuisms deserts from Shakespeare’; *The Robbers* ‘must not be considered with reference to Shakespeare’), Coleridge nevertheless came

²³ For a thorough investigation of the influence of Schiller on Coleridge and of speculative affinities between the two writers, see Michael John Kooy, *Coleridge, Schiller and Aesthetic Education* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002); and for Coleridge’s early knowledge of Kantianism, Monika Class, *Coleridge and Kantian Ideas in England, 1796-1817* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012).

²⁴ A second reason is that Coleridge’s own comparison of the *Wallenstein* plays with Shakespeare’s history plays, rather than his tragedies. The implication of this comparison was that Schiller’s drama was not of the highest level, given that plays such as *Henry V* ranked lower in the Romantic canon than *Othello* or *Macbeth*. (Matthew Scott makes this point in ‘The Circulation of Romantic Creativity: Coleridge, Drama, and the Question of Translation’, *Romanticism on the Net* 2 (1996), <https://www.erudit.org/revue/ron/1996/v/n2/005715ar.html>.) Thus Jonathan Bate, in *Shakespeare and the English Romantic Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), argues that ‘One weakness of Coleridge’s translations...is that he cannot resist introducing Shakespearean phrases, which detract from the stronger influence of character and action on the German originals. Schiller catches the bustle and energy of the history plays; Coleridge distracts from this by introducing phrases like “in my mind’s eye”, which make us think of very different parts of Shakespeare (see *Piccolomini I*, i. 28)’ (47).

²⁵ CL I 643, qtd CPW 171. Cf. CL I 579: ‘These cursed Plays play the Devil with me - I have been working from morning to night, and almost half the night too...’.

²⁶ ‘The Poet is dead in me—my imagination (or rather the Somewhat that had been imaginative) lies, like a Cold Snuff on the circular Rim of a Brass Candle-stick, without even a stink of Tallow to remind you that it was once clothed & mitred with Flame’ (CL II 714).

to consider it his own 'happiest attempt, during the prime manhood of my intellect'.²⁷

Coleridge's specific responses to the plays were more nuanced than the general and personal remarks just quoted. The drama of Schiller was controversial both in the German and the English reception (not merely in the translator's mind), and Coleridge summed up the problem pithily: 'It was too good, & not good enough'.²⁸ Like a history painting on a huge canvas, Schiller's trilogy aspired to the pinnacle of dramatic achievement, and indeed it far outstripped the run of 'sickly and stupid German Tragedies' of which the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* complains.²⁹ Yet it did not – in Coleridge's ultimate view – match the gold standard of Shakespeare.

In an annotation to one copy of the translations (belonging to Thomas De Quincey), Coleridge summarised his criticisms of the play in detail and with judicious balance. He uses Shakespeare, and specifically *Macbeth*, as a touchstone for comparison. Having noted that the *Wallenstein* plays are both 'prolix in the particular parts, and slow in the general movement', Coleridge continues:

The defects of these Dramas are all of an instructive character; for tho' not the products of genius, like those of Shakespear, they result from an energetic and thinking Mind. 1. The Speeches are seldom suited to the Characters—the characters are, truly, diversified & distinctly conceived—but we learn them from the actions, and from the descriptions given by the other characters, or from particular Speeches—The brutal Illo repeatedly talks a language which belongs to the Countess, &c—. 2. Astrology (an undramatic superstition, because it inspires no terror...) is made prophetic, & yet treated ludicrously--the Author as philosopher is in compleat discord with himself as Historian. This is a most grievous fault. 3. The Assassins talk ludicrously—This is a most egregious *misimitation* of Shakespere—Schiller should not have attempted Tragicomedy & none but Shakespere has succeeded. It is wonderful however, that Schiller, who had studied Shakespere, should not have perceived his divine Judgment in the management of his Assassins—as in *Macbeth*. They are fearful, and almost pitiable, Beings—not loathsome, ludicrous, Miscreants. 4. The character of Thekla=0... 5. Wallenstein himself is a finer psychological than dramatic,

²⁷ CL I 628, 7 Oct 1800 to Daniel Stuart; CN II 2598; TT I 339; 'happiest attempt', qtd. CPW 3:1, 173. For his part, in conversation with Henry Crabb Robinson on 21 November 1801, Schiller 'spoke well of Coleridge's Translation of his Wallenstein but said, there were some ridiculous Mistakes in it.' Robinson added: 'Schiller has a rather awkward Air and at the same time his Countenance is wild and excentric.' Hertha Marquardt, *Henry Crabb Robinson und seine deutschen Freunde. Brücke zwischen England und Deutschland im Zeitalter der Romantik*, 2 vols (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964-1967), I, 341.

²⁸ CL III 523-4. There is a useful collection of Coleridge's comments on Schiller in *Coleridge's Responses: Selected Writings on Literary Criticism, the Bible and Nature, Volume I: Coleridge on Writers and Writing*, ed. Seamus Perry (London: Continuum, 2008), 384-9.

²⁹ *Wordsworth's Poetry and Prose*, ed. Nicholas Halmi (New York: Norton, 2014), 81.

and a more dramatic than a tragic character. Shakespere draws Strength, as in Richard the third, and even when he blends weakness, as in Macbeth, Yet it is weakness of a specific kind, that leaves the Strength in full & fearful energy—but Schiller has drawn weakness imposing on itself the love of power for the sense of strength... Hence, Wallenstein... evaporates in mock-mysterious Speeches.— (CPW 3:1, 173-4)

Coleridge's puzzlement at Schiller's slow pace in this work is understandable: the rapidity of *The Robbers* had been, by contrast, one of the features Coleridge had most admired in that play. Coleridge clearly felt that the plays suffered from a ponderousness and lack of animating humour. Schiller's mind, though 'energetic', did not have the 'full & fearful energy' of Shakespeare.³⁰ Friedrich Schlegel in his satirical doggerel was blunter: 'Schick dein Schicksaal in die Saale,/ Es gereicht uns nur zur Quale' [Throw your fate in the (river) Saale, it's just a torture for us].³¹ Schlegel's dismissiveness, though, provides an informative context for Coleridge's critique. The patience that Coleridge displayed with the *Wallenstein* plays was in fact considerable. And Coleridge testified to their permanent value in another marginal comment:

The great main moral of this Play is, the Danger of dallying with evil thoughts under the influence of superstition, as did Wallenstein; and the grandeur of perfect Sincerity in Max. Piccolomini, the unhappy Effects of Insincerity, tho' for the best purposes, in his Father Octavio. (CPW 3:1, 175)

The Wallenstein plays: the murder of sleep

Coleridge's translations enjoyed great success in the nineteenth century, yet they are little-read today, and the story of Wallenstein (whether in history or in the drama) is no longer familiar.³² It may be helpful to recall how the basic setting and plot contribute to the fate-laden atmosphere. Schiller's work consists of three parts: a prologue entitled *Wallenstein's Camp*, which Coleridge did not translate; *The Piccolomini*; and finally *The Death of Wallenstein*. These plays are based on an episode in the Thirty Years' War (1618-48). The Holy Roman Empire was divided between the Catholic League and the princes of the Protestant Union, and a Protestant uprising in Bohemia

³⁰ Energy is the quality of Shakespeare's imagination that Coleridge celebrates in *Biographia Literaria* chapter 15.

³¹ Quoted from *Wallenstein*, ed. by Frithjof Stock (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 2005), 946.

³² This is so even in Germany, according to Lesley Sharpe, *Friedrich Schiller: Drama, Thought and Politics* (Cambridge, 1991), 221. On the impact of *Wallenstein* on past German culture, see Steffan Davies, *The Wallenstein Figure in German Literature and Historiography 1790-1920* (London: Modern Humanities Research Association, 2010), esp. ch. 2. Peter Will described the plot in detail in a two-part article in *The German Museum* I (1800), 26-39; 111-120. For a critical analysis of Will's sample translations and a dissection of the legends to which they gave rise, see Joyce Crick, 'Coleridge's *Wallenstein*: Two Legends', *Modern Language Review*, 83: 1 (January 1988), 76-86.

in 1619 led to the deposition of King Ferdinand II, who was elected Holy Roman Emperor. Ferdinand II turned for help to Albrecht von Wallenstein (1583-1634), Duke of Friedland, a wealthy Bohemian nobleman who had converted to Catholicism for political reasons (as Coleridge's Wallenstein puts it, 'Mass-book or Bible – 'tis all one to me', *Death of Wallenstein*, Act III Scene 3, 20) but was primarily attached to astrology. The historical Wallenstein may be seen, at different moments or from different perspectives, as either a powerful agent or a pawn in a greater game. Wallenstein's self-funded army was so successful that the Catholic princes themselves anxiously stripped him of his generalship in 1630; but he was then recalled to action in response to a new threat from the Protestant King of Sweden. Wallenstein again campaigned successfully, but when he withdrew his army to Bohemia in 1633-34 the rumour spread that he was negotiating secretly with Sweden and Saxony to establish a peace, with religious freedom, in a fully unified Germany. Wallenstein's personal reward for such an arrangement would have been to rule Bohemia. The Holy Roman Emperor's fears thus seemed to be realised. One of Wallenstein's officers, Octavio Piccolomini, betrayed Wallenstein to the Emperor, and it was at the latter's instigation that Wallenstein was assassinated in 1634. Schiller, as professor of History at the University of Jena in the 1790s, told this story in factual form in his book on the 'Thirty Years' War.

Wallenstein's Camp, advertised (CPW 3:1, 168) but not translated by Coleridge perhaps because he was weary of the extensive labour,³³ introduces both the power and the astrological superstition of Wallenstein via the gossip of soldiers. *The Piccolomini* then opens with Wallenstein's soldiers debating their loyalties. When Wallenstein meets his wife, the Duchess of Friedland, whom he has not seen for years during his campaigns, she reports the great suspicion of Wallenstein in the imperial camp at Vienna. Meanwhile, Wallenstein seems initially oblivious to the fact that his daughter, Thekla, is in love with Max Piccolomini, an irreproachable officer but not the princely match for which Wallenstein hoped. Count Tertsy (Wallenstein's brother-in-law) and Field Marshall Illo urge him not to delay, but to pursue a pact with Sweden openly. Wallenstein, resentful of his treatment at the Emperor's hands, is tempted to consolidate his power in this way; but he hesitates to rebel, protesting that the stars are not yet properly aligned. The Emperor's envoy, Questenberg, arrives to demand that Wallenstein release his troops to free Regensburg from Swedish control. Wallenstein refuses to act, yet the Emperor has in fact already decreed that Wallenstein should be removed from command: his replacement is to be Octavio Piccolomini, machiavellian father of the idealistic young lover Max. Wallenstein has trusted his deliberations to Illo and Isolani and to Captain Butler, but these men eventually prove to be perilous confidants.

When Octavio Piccolomini explains to his son that Wallenstein intends to

³³ Crick, 'Something on William Shakespeare', 35, suggests that it was written too late for Coleridge to translate it.

betray the Emperor through an alliance with Sweden, Max responds incredulously. He becomes disillusioned with both members of the older generation: Octavio and then Wallenstein himself. Yet Wallenstein's intention never truly clarifies, and he continues to hesitate over making a clear break with the Emperor. Even his response to hearing that his letters to the king of Sweden have been intercepted is an anguished speech, rather than action. The Swedish emissary, Wrangel, urges him to join Sweden openly, and at Illo and Tertsy's instigation, the Countess Tertsy (Wallenstein's sister-in-law) forcefully reminds Wallenstein of his grudge against the Emperor. Thekla and the Duchess of Friedland, like Max, are shocked when they learn of Wallenstein's treasonous plans. Wallenstein's star-lore has done nothing to improve his situation.

In *The Death of Wallenstein* it is Butler who becomes the chief agent as the pace of events accelerates. He plots to assassinate Wallenstein. When the news arrives that Max has been killed while fighting for the Imperial army against the Swedes, Thekla commits suicide on his grave. Wallenstein ignores the advice of Seni, his astrologer, to escape: thus his will remains effectively paralysed. Illo and Tertsy are killed, and Butler kills Wallenstein with the aid of two accomplices. Octavio washes his hands of the crime; but Countess Tertsy is so horrified at learning that Wallenstein has been murdered and that his wife is dying that she swallows poison. *The Death of Wallenstein* ends darkly, with Octavio's response to a missive from the Emperor that pronounces him Prince Piccolomini: Octavio '(with his whole frame expressive of sudden anguish, raises his eyes to heaven.) *The Curtain drops.*'

There is an obvious background similarity between the *Wallenstein* plays and *Macbeth*: in both cases, armies and battles provide the setting for a drama of personal ambition and revenge. There are several more important thematic similarities, too.³⁴ First, the stars and the presence of the astrologer Seni function as a kind of equivalent of the witches. These elements provide an *atmosphere* of necessity, without meaning that fate 'actually' controls the dramatic events. In both Schiller and Shakespeare the main protagonist hides behind these supposed manifestations of fate, using them rhetorically as a means to deny personal responsibility for (in)action. Just as Shakespeare's witches took the place filled by oracles in ancient Greek drama, so Schiller employed the symbol of fate to which the historical Duke Wallenstein appealed.

Second, the style of Countess Tertsy's appeal to Wallenstein's resentment against the Emperor resembles Lady Macbeth's incitement of Macbeth's hatred toward Duncan. Countess Tertsy demands that Wallenstein act in a manly fashion. She plays opportunistically on his own weakness. First, she urges, 'O let not Superstition's nightly goblins/ Subdue thy clear bright spirit!'; then she

³⁴ For a thorough analysis see Dieter Borchmeyer, *Macht und Melancholie. Schillers Wallenstein* (Frankfurt am Main, 1988), 219-27. Further, Joyce Crick, 'Coleridge's *Wallenstein*: Available Dictions', in *Second Hand: Papers on the Theory and Historical Study of Literary Translation*, ed. Theo Hermans (Antwerp, 1986), 128-63.

asserts that the astrological signs do confirm the rectitude of rebellion. Her rhetorical questions almost succeed in goading Wallenstein into action at last:

...The starry courses
Hast thou thy life long measured to no purpose?
...
...Is all this preparation nothing?
Is there no marrow in this hollow art,
That even to thyself it doth avail
Nothing, and has no influence over thee
In the great moment of decision?—
(*Piccolomini*, Act IV Scene 7, lines 231-2, 238-42)

This suggestion that Wallenstein himself is a hollow man provokes him to decisive-sounding talk: 'Send Wrangel to me – I will instantly/ Despatch three couriers' (ibid., 243-4). But he has still not done this by the end of *The Piccolomini*. If Countess Tertsy embodies the ruthlessness of Lady Macbeth in this scene, her undoing is also similar: her distraction (she is 'pale and disordered', *Death of Wallenstein* V.10) and suicide ('I have taken poison... In a few moments is my fate accomplished', V.10, 49, 51) at the end of *The Death of Wallenstein* recalls Lady Macbeth's final misery.

Third, there are various specific allusions to *Macbeth*, most prominently in the scene of Wallenstein's assassination. Having been previously cast in the role of Macbeth himself, Wallenstein at this point steps into Duncan's shoes. He ominously tells Gordon, who has in fact been conspiring against him, 'I will lay me down to sleep'. (Coleridge's translation does not quite catch the dramatic irony of the original, in which Wallenstein anticipates a *long* sleep: 'Ich denke einen langen Schlaf zu tun'.) Schiller also borrows from Shakespeare's suspenseful build-up of the scene.³⁵ Just before the murder, Gordon's anxious cry, 'He sleeps! O murder not the holy sleep!' echoes Macbeth's words after the killing of Duncan, 'Macbeth hath murdered sleep'. In both plays, the murder occurs offstage. Seni's horrified exclamation, 'O bloody frightful deed' resembles Ross's question, 'Is't known who did this more than bloody deed?' (*Macbeth*, Act I, Scene 4, 22). But we are constantly aware that Wallenstein, as victim, is now 'a counter-image to Macbeth',³⁶ and indeed the general differences between the *Wallenstein* plays and *Macbeth* are as suggestive as the similarities. Whereas *Macbeth* ends with the country returning to an honourable government in the person of Malcolm, there is no such hope of a satisfactory peace embodied in Prince Octavio Piccolomini at

³⁵ See Paul Steck, *Schiller und Shakespeare. Idee und Wirklichkeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1977), p. 173. See Prince Albert's illustration (final page below), in which the Groom of the Chamber 'throws himself at the Duke's feet' to express his desire that Wallenstein reconcile himself to the Emperor.

³⁶ 'Wallenstein is in some respects akin to Macbeth in his ambition, as he moves into the orbit of the Lady Macbeth-like figure of the Duchess Terzky. But he is also a counter-image to Macbeth. He is the victim of a murderer, rather than the murderer, himself, compounding the irony and the sense we have of Buttler as a figure of nemesis. We do not, however, see Wallenstein asleep...'. John Guthrie, *Schiller the Dramatist: A Study of Gesture in the Plays* (Rochester, New York: Camden House, 2009), 126.

the end of *The Death of Wallenstein*. The ominous conclusion of the latter play perhaps resembles instead the end of *Hamlet*, with abrupt silence suddenly supplanting bloody chaos – and *Hamlet* is also a major inspiration for the theme of the hero's delay and irresolution, an aspect that may have attracted Coleridge to this translation project in the first place.³⁷

Coleridge	Henry Crabb Robinson
Max O never rudely will I blame his faith In the might of stars and angels! 'Tis not merely The human being's PRIDE that peoples space With life and mystical predominance; Since likewise for the stricken heart of LOVE This visible nature, and this common world, Is all too narrow: yea, a deeper import Lurks in the legend told my infant years Than lies upon that truth, we live to learn. For fable is Love's world, his home, his birth-place: Delightedly dwells he 'mong fays and talismans, And spirits; and delightedly believes Divinities, being himself divine. The intelligible forms of ancient poets, The fair humanities of old religion, The Power, the Beauty, and the Majesty, That had their haunts in dale, or piny mountain, Or forest by slow stream, or pebbly spring, Or chasms and wat'ry depths; all these have vanish'd. They live no longer in the faith of reason! But still the heart doth need a language, still Doth the old instinct bring back the old names. And to yon starry world they now are gone. Spirits or gods, that us'd to share this earth With man as with their friend; and to the lover Yonder they move, from yonder visible sky Shoot influence down: and even at this day 'Tis Jupiter who brings whate'er is great, And Venus who brings every thing that's fair!	Max Oh I will never chide him for believing, The secret influence of stars and spirits; Tis not alone the pride of Man which fills All space with spirits and mysterious powers: Mere common nature is not wide enough To fill a loving breast. And deeper import Lies in the fables of my infant years Than in the dry truths of experience. [Th'enchanting world of miracle alone Answers the raptures of my beating breast heart, Opens its boundless regions, and presents New fields of Joy on which my astonish'd Soul Enraptur'd sinks and heavenly Bliss inhales] And fable is the native place ^natural home^ of love, He dwells with joy 'mongst ffairies talismans and Has ffaith in God because himself is godlike. The ancient fabled beings are no more The fascinating race is now extinct, But still the Heart wants language, ancient Names Survive still, for the ancient impulse lives: They who once friendly wander'd here on earth Now wander oer the ffirmament of heaven Thence twinkling down on lovers here below The great still shine on us in Jupiter In Venus every ffair,

Coleridge's enhancement of the echoes of Macbeth

Having considered *Macbeth's* haunting of *Wallenstein* in a general sense, I will now analyse speeches by three main characters, considering above all the ways in which Coleridge handled the *Macbeth*-like themes. Crick provides apt terms for such analysis: Coleridge sometimes *over-translates*, and sometimes *returns with interest* an image or allusion he finds in Schiller's text. These are respectively negative and positive ways of describing Coleridge's habitual practice. The speech in which Max idealistically vindicates Wallenstein's superstitious beliefs is a striking example of this tendency in the translator.

³⁷ As emphasised by Ziolkowski, *Hesitant Hero*.

Comparing Coleridge's lengthy version of the speech with the shorter German original, we can see at once that Coleridge has added some lines of his own, at one point expanding two lines into seven (highlighted in bold). In a manuscript translation of this speech by Henry Crabb Robinson, Max's two lines, 'Die alten Dichterbilder sind nicht mehr,/ Das reizende Geschlecht ist ausgewandert', are faithfully rendered: 'The ancient fabled beings are no more/ The fascinating race is now extinct'. Coleridge instead turns this relative aside into the main point of the speech:³⁸

Schiller

Max

O! nimmer will ich seinen Glauben schelten
An der Gestirne, an der Geister Macht.
Nicht bloß der *Stolz* des Menschen füllt den Raum
Mit Geistern, mit geheimnißvollen Kräften,
Auch für ein liebend Herz ist die gemeine
Natur zu eng, und tiefere Bedeutung
Liegt in den Mährchen meiner Kinderjahre,
Als in der Wahrheit, die das Leben lehrt.
[Die heitre Welt der Wunder ist's allein,
Die dem entzückten Herzen Antwort gibt,
Die ihre ew'gen Räume mit eröffnet,
Mir tausend Zweige reich entgegenstreckt,
Worauf der trunkne Geist sich selig wiegt.]
Die Fabel ist der Liebe Heimathwelt,
Gern wohnt sie unter Feen, Talismanen,
Glaubt gern an Götter, weil sie göttlich ist.
Die alten Dichterbilder sind nicht mehr,
Das reizende Geschlecht ist ausgewandert;
Doch eine Sprache braucht das Herz, es bringt
Der alte Trieb die alten Namen wieder,
Und an dem Sternenhimmel gehn sie jetzt,
Die Sonst im Leben freundlich mit gewandelt,
Dort winken sie dem Liebeneden herab,
Und jedes Große bringt uns *Jupiter*
Noch diesen Tag, und *Venus* jedes Schöne.

The intelligible forms of ancient
poets,
The fair humanities of old religion,
The Power, the Beauty, and the
Majesty,
That had their haunts in dale, or
piny mountain,
Or forest by slow stream, or pebbly
spring,
Or chasms and wat'ry depths; all
these have vanish'd.
They live no longer in the faith of
reason!

The phrase 'Faith of reason',
prompted perhaps by Kant's term
'Vernunftglaube' (reasonable
belief), helps to turn this speech
into a critique of Enlightenment
demystification. Coleridge had
previously, in *Religious Musings*,
mourned the extinct pagan deities

in the manner of Milton's 'On the Morning of Christ's Nativity'; and he took an interest in Schiller's own handling of this theme, noting in 1799, 'Send for Schiller's Götter des Greekenlandes' (CN I 494). Coleridge's elaboration of this point in Max's speech is compelling, but it distracts from the main point: Max has tragically misunderstood Wallenstein's motivation. Max suggests that the ancient spirits of place have now been exiled to the stars (astrology has replaced classical religion), where they '[twinkle] down on lovers here below' (to borrow Robinson's translation). But Wallenstein is an ambitious warrior, and not a young lover, as Max is. Hence Thekla's affectionate but appropriately sceptical response to Max's words: 'And if *this* be the science of the stars,/ I

³⁸ Max's speech, *Die Piccolomini*, Act II Scene 4, Coleridge's translation from CPW 3:1, 362-9. Henry Crabb Robinson's manuscript translation: HCR Collection, Bundle V.4 (Dr Williams's Library, London), ff. 13-14. Probably soon after December 1801. I have inserted 5 lines in the German text in square brackets, which the text used by Robinson evidently contained, but that used by Coleridge did not.

too, with glad and zealous industry,/ Will learn acquaintance with this cheerful faith.³⁹ Unfortunately, Max's poetic reverie is *not* the science of the stars.

The inserted lines are the most prominent instance of over-translation in Coleridge's rendition of Max's speech, but by no means the only one. It seems possible that Henry Crabb Robinson had read Coleridge's translation and was puzzled by the liberties taken with this speech: this would explain why Robinson drafted his own translation in his notebook. (Robinson, like Coleridge, translates 'tiefer Bedeutung' as 'deeper import', and 'Kinderjahre' as 'infant years': this may suggest that he had Coleridge's version in front of him, though these choices could also be coincidental.) A comparison of the first few lines reveals Coleridge's tendency to hyperbole: Robinson translates 'Geister' normally as 'spirits', whereas Coleridge has the more religiously-charged 'angels'. Again, 'Mit Geistern, mit geheimnißvollen Kräften' is 'with spirits and mysterious powers' in Robinson's literal translation, but 'With life and mystical predominance' in Coleridge's overwrought version. It is unusual for Coleridge to stray from the German text to this extent, but he did issue due warning in his Preface: 'in two or three short passages I have been guilty of dilating the original' (CPW 3:1, 205). It is difficult to see any reason for doing so other than a deep personal concern of the translator, who was by no means detached from the 'disgusting' labour.

Macbeth is rarely far from the key scenes in Schiller, and that is to an even greater extent true of Coleridge's translation. Max follows his optimistic speech by declaring: 'Reichenberg,/ And Friedland Castle, both *lie pleasantly*' (emphasis mine). This is Coleridge's way of picking up the resonance of the original: 'Auch Reichenberg, Schloß Friedland liegen heiter' echoes Thekla's 'diesem heitern Glauben' ('this cheerful faith'). Coleridge's formulation, in turn, strikingly recalls the doomed optimism of Duncan:

This castle hath a *pleasant seat*, the air
Nimble and sweetly recommends itself
Unto our gentle senses.

(*Macbeth*, Act I Scene 6, emphasis mine)

To hear such an echo is to sense Wallenstein's impending fate.

A second key speech is Wallenstein's soliloquy. Again, Coleridge turns Schiller's relatively spare and direct composition into a thing of Shakespearean complexity. Wallenstein expresses bewildered dismay at the fact that merely entertaining the thought of rebellion, though 'not/ My serious meaning, [...] ne'er resolve', seems to have obliged him to carry it out in deed. In Coleridge's translation:

The free-will tempted me, the power to do
Or not to do it. – Was it criminal
To make the fancy minister to hope,

³⁹ I have added italics to 'this' in Coleridge's translation to reflect Schiller's original emphasis.

To fill the air with pretty toys of air,
And clutch fantastic sceptres moving t'ward me.

(*Piccolomini* Act IV Scene 4, 13-17)

'The free-will tempted me' is stronger than Schiller's 'Die Freiheit reizte mich' [the freedom charmed me]. In Coleridgean terms it is a daring phrase. It would be more usual to conceive of free will as the power by which an individual follows (or resists) temptation, whereas Wallenstein feels that free will *in itself* constitutes temptation. Then, with the phrase 'to do/ Or not to do it', Coleridge recalls Hamlet to our minds.⁴⁰ This is appropriate to Wallenstein's propensity to delay and resolving to resolve, yet it is more than Schiller does at this point. Coleridge then adds echoes of *Macbeth*: Wallenstein's clutching at 'fantastic sceptres' recalls Macbeth's soliloquy ('Is this a dagger I see before me,/ The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee', II I 33-4; later, Lady Macbeth is 'troubled with thick-coming fancies,/ That keep her from her rest', V iii 38-40).⁴¹

Wallenstein continues:

Was not the will kept free? Beheld I not
The road of duty close beside me – but
One little step, and once more I was in it!
Where am I? Whither have I been transported?
No road, no track behind me, but a wall,
Impenetrable, insurmountable,
Rises obedient to the spells I mutter'd
And meant not – my own doings tower behind me.

(*Piccolomini*, Act IV, Scene 4, 18-25)

Again Coleridge builds on the relatively spare foundation of Schiller's text. When he speaks of the 'guten Weg', Schiller's Wallenstein probably thinks primarily of the biblical 'strait way', but Coleridge more expansively employs the terms of Kantian morality: 'The road of duty'. Coleridge had often invoked 'duty' before,⁴² but from around 1800 the concept takes on a new significance in his writing, gradually becoming one of the pillars of the moral system that supplanted his early Unitarianism. In Wallenstein's speech, as rendered by Coleridge, the principal thought is an alarming one: if our imagination should stray even as much as one step from the proper path there may, perhaps, be no further chance of salvation.⁴³ The sense of confinement that such a thought

⁴⁰ *Hamlet*, Act III Scene 1, 56, as noted in CPW 3:1, 506n. Crick and Mays observe: 'This is a very happy extension. C has perceived that the verbal-noun form of *Vermögen* gives it connotations of potential action.'

⁴¹ *Macbeth*, Act II Scene 1, 33-4, Act V Scene 3, 38-40 – the allusions are noted by Crick and Mays.

⁴² The notorious instance is his comment regarding marriage to Sara Fricker: 'Mark you, Southey!—*I will do my Duty*' (CL I 145).

⁴³ This may be seen as a variation on the concept with which Coleridge experimented before he began decisively to assert the freedom of the moral will: 'I will at least make the attempt to explain to myself the Origin of moral Evil from the *streamy* Nature of Association, which Thinking = Reason, curbs and

may generate is nicely captured in the image of the wall. Coleridge reinforces that image by adding a polysyllabic line not present in the German: 'Impenetrable, insurmountable'. He also squeezes all the potential from the situation created by Schiller: 'the spells I mutter'd' has no equivalent in the German, but it does reflect the misguided reliance on astrology that enabled the self-deluding Wallenstein to evade responsibility for taking decisive action.

Third, Coleridge both responds to and introduces Shakespearean resonances in the speeches of Butler, the assassin. Butler denies any guilt in his action by appealing to fate – just as, ironically, Wallenstein himself had done in a different context. Like many of the characters in the *Wallenstein* plays, Butler appeals to duty, but he convinces himself that he is destined to perform the function of a nemesis: 'Dark thoughts and bloody are my duty now'.⁴⁴ He explains:

... 'tis not now my hatred that impels me
To be his murderer. 'Tis his evil fate.
Hostile concurrences of many events
Control and subjugate me to the office.
In vain the human being meditates
Free action. He is but the wire-work'd puppet
Of the blind power, which out of his own choice
Creates for him a dread necessity.

(*Death of Wallenstein*, Act III Scene 8, 41-48)

As in Wallenstein's soliloquy, the thought expressed here is oppressive: we have no free will, and our actions are governed not by a benevolent God, but only a 'blind power'. The strength of Coleridge's emotional response to this speech appears in the fact that he overtranslates 'Spielwerk' [toy] as 'wire-work'd puppet', and then appends a note objecting to this very phrase: 'We doubt the propriety of putting so blasphemous a sentiment in the mouth of any character.' Crick and Mays point out that '[t]he semantic element –*werk* may have triggered Coleridge's expansion, but the result is over-reaction (in the fn) and over-translation.' It is revealing, however, that Schiller's friend Christian Gottfried Körner made a similar objection in a letter to the playwright. Rather like Coleridge, Körner thought the characterisation of Butler inadequate, his view being that the villain ought to be 'darker' and less forthcoming in speech. Körner recommended that Schiller omit the above-quoted monologue, which he considered a mere expression of Butler's egotism.⁴⁵

Butler's Shakespearean repertoire broadens when he explains his bitterness against Wallenstein. Octavio had told him that Duke had deliberately hindered

rudders' (CN I 1770).

⁴⁴ This resembles Hamlet's self-urging to the role of revenger: 'Now could I drink hot blood,/ And do such bitter business as the day/ Would quake to look on'. *Hamlet*, Act III Scene 3, 381-3.

⁴⁵ Körner's comments are quoted in *Wallenstein*, ed. Oellers, 258, 262.

his advancement, hence his use of the arch-villain Iago's phrase: 'I treasur'd *my good name* all my life long;/ The Duke has cheated me of life's best jewel' (*Death of Wallenstein*, Act III Scene 9, emphasis mine). It is in Act IV Scene 2 that Butler explains to Macdonald and Devereux that he has chosen them as his accomplices in the assassination. Butler here appears for the first time as entirely cynical, and Coleridge raises an objection to the dramatic propriety of this alteration in character. In his annotations to Wordsworth's copy of the play, he writes:

In this Scene I cannot but contrast Shakespere's with Schiller's Judgment. See the Macbeth. This should have been narrated – it is too late in the Piece, & leaves Butler no longer a *mixed character*, but the Object of painful abhorrence. – A whole essay would be necessary in order for me to explain all my meaning – But read Macbeth.

(CPW 3:1, 821)

Coleridge does explain his meaning a little further in his subsequent annotations. He felt that Schiller had trespassed against moral taste in Butler's dialogue with Devereux. Devereux fears that killing Wallenstein would ill repay the Duke's generosity: Wallenstein had paid for the 'good warm coat' (line 106) that Devereux is now wearing. Having argued that Wallenstein himself was guilty of far worse ingratitude against the Emperor, a point that immediately convinces the obtuse Devereux, Butler adds:

And would'st quiet
Thy conscience, thou hast nought to do but simply
Pull off the coat; so can'st thou do the deed
With light heart and good spirits.

Death of Wallenstein, Act IV Scene 2, 113-16

Butler's words accomplish their purpose, as Devereux agrees at once. But Coleridge protests in the margin of his own translation:

All this is *Grotesque*. The Conscience, when once awakened, plays no such caprices with any man. Schiller forgot, that tho' men may be wretches, yet Conscience is *God* – the same in all men, when it is Conscience –

(CPW 3:1, 837)

This is a puzzling note. It is not surprising that Coleridge should object to Schiller's rather un-Shakespearean prolongation of this painful scene, especially in the light of his general complaint (above-quoted) that Schiller portrayed his characters without proper consistency or dramatic propriety. Nor is the phrase 'Conscience is *God*' surprising in itself: it is a kind of compressed summary of Coleridge's whole mature system. But what Coleridge's critique of Schiller on the point of conscience seems to overlook (a point Coleridge later implicitly

admitted, as we'll see below) is that the playwright and translator are in fact thinking along similar lines. Far from forgetting the principle that 'Conscience is *God*', Schiller creates a situation in which a character's conscience has *not* been properly awakened. Devereux is convinced by Butler's argument not only because he is unintelligent, but also because his vanity prompts him: his envy is easily aroused against the Duke, and at the same time he is desperate not to appear cowardly. Thus Schiller dramatises what Coleridge would later, in his marginalia to *Macbeth*, term a mode of lulling the conscience. In *Aids to Reflection* (1825) he poses the question: 'Art thou under the tyranny of sin? a slave to vicious habits? at enmity with God, and a skulking fugitive from thy own conscience?' (AR 53).

As I have suggested in considering the speeches of Wallenstein and Butler, the keynote of Schiller's drama lies precisely here: the characters persistently use the notion of fate or necessity as a cover to justify what they do, whether inactive dallying with treason (in Wallenstein's case) or murder (in Butler's). I also wish to use this view to respond to two of Coleridge's above-quoted general criticisms of the *Wallenstein* plays. Coleridge felt that Schiller's undisguised disbelief in astrology clashed too overtly with Wallenstein's credulity; yet this dissonance is quite consistent with the self-deception of the principal character. Wallenstein, like Butler, has chosen to believe in a crudely necessitarian scheme. By using this worldview as a justification for deferring action, he surrenders the very free will which he failed to acknowledge. Coleridge's comment that Wallenstein 'evaporates in mock-mysterious Speeches' is quite correct, but this is best seen (I think) as part of Schiller's design. When he came to re-apply the lessons of *Wallenstein* to *Macbeth*, however, Coleridge fully appreciated the use of dramatic rhetoric in a character's self-deception.

The re-application of Wallenstein to Macbeth

My argument by way of conclusion is that despite his negative comments on Schiller's dramatic technique, Coleridge owed formulations such as 'Conscience is *God*' partly to his experience of translating *Wallenstein*. Coleridge subsequently drew on his translation of *Wallenstein* when he came to lecture on *Macbeth*. He eagerly remarks in his marginalia to the play that its 'Key-note' is set by the witches, in their initial appearance and their 're-entrance'. But in his view the world of *Macbeth* is *not* governed by supernatural impositions of fate, but by the moral agency of individuals. Analysing Macbeth's reflection on the witches' prophecy, Coleridge comments in 1817:

King hereafter was still contingent – still in Macbeth's moral will – tho' if he yielded to the temptation & thus forfeited his free-agency, then the link of cause and effect *more physico* [in a physical manner] would

commence[.]⁴⁶

This is a concise expression of the moral principle of Coleridge's mature system. It *nearly* describes the action of the *Ancient Mariner*: the protagonist commits a crime (though in that poem there was no clear 'temptation') and from that moment necessarily and passively endures the retribution he has provoked. It more closely corresponds to what we have seen in the *Wallenstein* plays: Wallenstein strays from the 'road of duty', though only in thought, and so falls into the necessary chain of cause and effects in which he (like his murderer, Butler) believes. That Coleridge understood how much he had learnt from Schiller's treatment of this theme is apparent in the continuation of his note on *Macbeth*. Here Coleridge refers directly to the above-quoted soliloquy of Wallenstein (*Piccolomini*, Act IV, Scene 4), beginning 'Is't so?/ I *can* no longer what I *would*?' and proceeding to the confession that 'The free-will tempted me':

But O how truly Shakespearean is the opening of Macbeth's Character given in the *unpossessedness* of Banquo's mind, wholly present to the present Object – an unsullied un-scarified Mirror – & in strict truth of Nature that he and not Macbeth himself directs our notice to the effect produced on Macbeth's Mind, rendered *temptible* by previous dalliance of the Fancy with ambitious Thoughts. (See Wallenstein's Soliloquy, Part I.) ... So truly is the guilt in its Germ anterior to the supposed cause & immediate temptation –.⁴⁷

The further comments in which Coleridge continues to apply this moral principle show more generosity to Shakespeare than he showed to Schiller when objecting that the latter 'forgot...that Conscience is *God*'. Quoting Macbeth's sophistical appeal to 'chance', Coleridge observes that Shakespeare shows 'the warning of the Conscience – & the mode of lulling it – If chance will have me King, why &c'.⁴⁸ His final comment about Macbeth's selfishness again echoes Wallenstein's soliloquy: 'Could he have every thing, he wanted, he would *rather* have it innocently – ignorant, as alas! how many are! that he who wishes a temporal end for itself does in truth will the *means* – hence the danger of indulging fancies –'.⁴⁹ As the arch-indulger of fancies, Wallenstein in his downfall proved unhappily that 'Conscience is *God*'. Fate, or necessity, is created by human decisions. Having created the chain of cause and effect, whether through decision or indecision, free will can no longer intervene: the appeal to destiny (such as Wallenstein and Butler both make) thus becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. This is the idea towards which Coleridge was moving in his *Macbeth*-related poetry of the 1790s. Around 1800 Schiller may have

⁴⁶ Coleridge, *A Book I Value: Selected Marginalia*, ed. H.J. Jackson (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003), 87.

⁴⁷ *A Book I Value*, 87-88.

⁴⁸ *A Book I Value*, 88-89.

⁴⁹ *A Book I Value*, 89.

grasped it more clearly than he did. That at least is what the parenthetical comment in Coleridge's marginalia to *Macbeth*, '(See Wallenstein's Soliloquy)', would suggest. It is a small but important clue to the development of Coleridge's moral thought.



Prince Albert, 'Wallenstein and His Servant' (1840), etching

The Groom of the Chamber is throwing himself at the Duke's feet to express his desire that Wallenstein reconcile himself to the Emperor. (See fn.35 and CPW 3: 1, 905)

The *Wallenstein* plays once had the semi-Shakespearean status of national poems: According to W. E. Gladstone, Queen Victoria quoted Wallenstein's threnody on the death of Max as 'answer[ing] to her feelings' about her late consort (cf. CPW 3: 1, 883). Thus in *Wallenstein* Albert found an emblem of loyalty and Victoria an emblem of grief.